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Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names
New York, 8-17 August 2017
Item 14 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Writing systems and pronunciation: conversion into non-Roman writing systems

New developments in formulating guidelines for converting geographical names from foreign languages into Chinese

Summary**

For the past few years, China has been constantly strengthening the work of converting geographical names from foreign languages into Chinese. On the basis of the eight guidelines for converting geographical names from foreign languages into Chinese, China has formulated four new standards over the past five years, which include the conversion of geographical names from Korean, Japanese, Persian and Lao into Chinese.

Chinese is the official language of China and also one of the six working languages of the United Nations. As pictograms, Chinese characters are able to express both sound and meaning. It is common for one Chinese character to have multiple pronunciations and for multiple characters to have the same pronunciation. Therefore, the only way to achieve standardization in the conversion of foreign geographical names into Chinese is to apply specialized techniques and norms. The four new conversion guidelines all involve the conversion between Chinese and non-Roman writing systems. The common principles for conversion are:

(a) To use original materials and adopt commonly accepted Chinese translations in conversion. Maps, gazetteers, geographical dictionaries and other materials used in converting geographical names from foreign languages into Chinese should be official, up-to-date and standardized. Commonly accepted Chinese translations of foreign geographical names should be followed;

(b) To transliterate proper nouns and translate common nouns;

(c) To convert derived names and eponyms in the same manner as was done for the source names.

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Item 9 (d) of the provisional agenda*
National standardization: Administrative structure of national names authorities, legislation, policies and procedures

Geographical Names Network in Sweden

Summary**

The Geographical Names Network was established in 2013 under the responsibility of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was created to generate awareness and share best practices on how to standardize the use of foreign country names and other important geographical locations. Its purpose is to provide guidance and to give advice or recommendations on individual name issues, not only with regard to place names but also with regard to the names of public service authorities and job titles. Swedish terminology will be developed in this regard, and good place-name practice will be promoted.

The Geographical Names Network serves to promote standardized uniformity regarding place-name practice and provide advice on how to render foreign place names in different official situations, such as news reporting. It also provides the correct names of geographical locations in Swedish and advice on how to use them, including the use of diacritics in the Swedish and Sami languages. Information, advice and recommendations in this regard are published on the Internet.

The Geographical Names Network comprises the most relevant and important participants dealing with official activities regarding Swedish place names: the mapping, cadaster and real estate authority of Sweden, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute for Language and Folklore, including the Language Council of Sweden, the University of Uppsala, the Swedish Centre for Terminology, Radio Sweden, the Swedish Standards Institute, the Swedish Translation Service in the General Secretariat of the European Union Council and the Institute for the Languages of Finland.

The participants represent a core team and, together with their own networks, ensure a broad representation in society of ideas and recommendations of the Geographical Names Network.

* E/CONF.105/1.

** The full report was prepared by Annette Torensjö and Leila Mattfolk, and is available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf11.html, in the language of submission only, as document E/CONF.105/73/CRP.73.

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The representative from the Institute for Language and Folklore is the chair of the Geographical Names Network and the secretary represents the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Network meets three to four times per year, convened by the secretary. The Network is free to elect new members at their meetings, if they consider it necessary. Members can also invite relevant experts and lecturers to participate at single meetings. Members participate as representatives of their organizations, not in their personal capacity. Any member who is prevented from continuing to pa.ticipate is responsible for suggesting a replacement.

The Geographical Names Network is consulted on issues concerning questions of foreign names, for instance, the official book of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on how to use foreign place names. The book is intended for employees of Government offices, authorities and organizations, but it is also used by journalists and the general public. It contains country names and the names of European Union agencies. It also contains translations of the names of authorities and important organizations in Sweden, as well as titles in State services, into English, French, German and Spanish and, to a certain extent, Finnish and Russian.

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda*
National standardization

Guide on place-name standardization and good place-name practice

Summary**

In 2001, the Swedish agency responsible for place names compiled and published a guide on place-name standardization and good place-name practice. In 2016, it published a revised edition, primarily aimed at the local authorities dealing with official naming activities. The report provides further details.

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* E/CONF.105/1.

** The full report was prepared by Annette Torensjö and Leila Mattfolk. The report is available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf11.html, in the language of submission only, as document E/CONF.105/74/CRP.74.

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Tenth Conference (for distribution only)

Belarus

Summary**

Activities relating to the names of geographical objects in Belarus are regulated by the Law of Belarus, dated 16 November 2010, on names of geographical objects.

Coordination of the work to develop a single approach to the names of geographical objects is carried out by the Toponymic Commission under the Council of Ministers of Belarus, consisting of representatives of ministries, local councils, scientists of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and higher educational institutions and cartography specialists.

Over the past five years, the Toponymic Commission has approved 133 names of geographical objects; developed unified requirements, standards and rules for the assignment of names to components of the road network in honour of prominent State and sociopolitical figures and artists and for their accounting and usage; and approved a list of standardized names in Belarusian and Russian of railway objects of the country.

Public accounting of the names of geographical objects in the country is carried out in the State catalogue of names of geographical objects of Belarus, which is available to the public at http://maps.by. As at 1 May 2017, the State catalogue contained 36,459 names of geographical objects. Names are recorded in the State catalogue in Belarusian and Russian, as well as in Latin letters, in accordance with the romanization system for Belarusian geographical names approved at the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in 2012.

* E/CONF.105/1.

** The full report was prepared by the State Property Committee of Belarus. The report is available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf11.html, in the languages of submission only, as document E/CONF.105/75/CRP.75.

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The names of road network components in the country (by settlements) are recorded in the register of addresses of Belarus, which is accessible at http://nca.by.

Data from the State catalogue and the register of addresses must be used by public entities, other organizations and individuals, including entrepreneurs, carrying out activities in the field of the names of geographical objects.

In 2015, the standardization of names of public transport stopping points in Minsk was carried out. In the process, 850 names for 1,968 stopping points were standardized.

In order to ensure standardization in the field of geographical names of the world, as depicted in cartographic and other works, a reference book of names of States and territories of the world was prepared in 2012 and printed in 2013, establishing unified spelling forms for the names of States and territories of the world, their capitals and centres in the Belarusian, English and Russian languages and providing the names of 194 independent States and 40 territories. The database developed by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was used as the basis for spelling the names in English and Russian.

The prospects for the development of Belarusian toponymy lie in the standardization and harmonization of all existing names, the completion of the State catalogue and the issuing of reference and regulatory literature required for the optimization of work by bodies of State administration, legal entities and individuals, including entrepreneurs, when carrying out activities relating to geographical names.

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Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Tenth Conference (for distribution only)

Report of Finland

Summary**

The Institute for the Languages of Finland acts as an authoritative and coordinating organ in matters related to the standardization of place names by providing guidance for administrative bodies and by checking geographical names in the Geographic Names Register of the National Land Survey of Finland. The work is carried out on the basis of onomastic field research conducted since the beginning of the twentieth century, linguistic considerations, cultural history, local tradition and the practical demands of everyday life.

The main measures related to the standardization of place names that were taken from 2012 to 2017 were the proposal to enact legislation on place names and the digitalization of the names collection (names archive) of the Institute for the Languages of Finland.

In January 2014, the working group on clear administrative language, appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, issued a plan of action to improve the language of authorities. As a concrete proposal concerning the communication of the authorities, the plan of action includes a suggestion for enacting an act on place names to clarify the usage of traditional place names and the planning of new official names.

The digitalization of the names collection of the Institute for the Languages of Finland began in 2014. The project aims to convert all of the archive's place name cards, data capture maps and the related attributes and metadata to digital format. The objective is to open the digital archive by the end of 2017.

From 2012 to 2017, the Institute has continued to check the names on the Place Name Register maintained by the National Land Survey of Finland. Printed

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** The full report was prepared by Sirkka Paikkala, Ulla Onkamo (Institute for the Languages of Finland) and Teemu Leskinen (National Land Survey of Finland), and is available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf11.html, in the language of submission only, as document E/CONF.105/76/CRP.76.

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and electronic publications have been compiled of place names, including exonyms and settlement names, and recommendations and statements have been made on name planning and the spelling and use of place names.

The Geographic Names Register of the National Land Survey of Finland is the authoritative geographic names data repository of Finland and one of the elements included in the national and international spatial data infrastructure. The Register, initially developed in the late 1990s, was entirely renewed in a National Land Survey of Finland development project undertaken from 2010 to 2014. The reform covered the names data model and database, the names data management and integration with the production of national maps, the production application as well as the production lines and organization of work. The Geographic Names Register names feature classification, information services and data products have also been renewed.